

## **Commission on High School Graduation Achievement and Success Meeting**

October 19, 2012

10:00 am – 12:00 pm

Chicago – Lt. Governor's Videoconference Room

JRTC – 100 W. Randolph, 15<sup>th</sup> Floor

Springfield – Lt. Governor's Office

Capitol Building – Room 214

### **Minutes**

#### **Member Participants**

**Chicago** – Elaine Allensworth, Akeshia Craven, Stacy Davis-Gates, Vanessa Kinder, Rich Lesniak, Mark McDonald, Melissa Mitchell, Jane Russell, Miguel del Valle, Jack Wuest

**Springfield** – Andrea Brown, Rhonda Jenkins, Al Llorens, Jeffrey Mays, Candace Mueller, Diane Rutledge, Julie Wollerman, Victor Zimmerman

**Phone** –Rep. Linda Chapa LaVia, Sen. Kimberly Lightford, Al Llorens

#### **Other Participants**

Chicago: Julie Smith, Peg Agnos, Adam Weiner, Rene Crespín

Springfield: Lara Mbayed, Justin Stofferahn (for Member Lynn Haeffele), Susie Morrison, Nicole Wills, Cynthia Riseman, Mike McKindles, Superintendent Chris Koch

#### **I. Welcome – Introduction of Co-Chairs**

Miguel del Valle welcomed participants and led an introduction of members.

#### **II. Review and Approval of the Minutes**

Minutes from the 10/9 meeting were approved by consensus, with the amendment that “over-count graduates” be changed to “under-count dropouts” in the discussion of calculation of graduation rates.

#### **III. Discussion – Presentation by ISBE**

ISBE Superintendent Chris Koch spoke to members on issues related to defining, identifying and reporting on dropouts and graduation rates. Mike McKindles reviewed a fact sheet that the agency prepared and addressed topics raised by the committee including how the graduation rate is calculated, relevant definitions, available resources and the impact of an increase in the compulsory school age. Superintendent Koch discussed the Chief State School Officers worked with NGA and the Department of Education to implement uniform, national definitions and procedures for calculating graduation rates.

##### **a. Current Graduation Rates**

- i. Mike McKindles noted that Illinois now collects course/enrollment data at a more detailed level. He noted that districts have reported that their graduation rates have dropped somewhat and that ISBE provides support for districts in calculating the graduation rate. For example, districts can go back and make corrections to cohorts (e.g., if a student has validly left the district). ISBE is also using common education data and standards for integration.

**b. Current State Resources**

- i. Superintendent Koch – Early intervention is critically significant. Reaching kids when they first experience difficulties and frustration with the school system reduces the risk of dropping out. This highlights the need to identify resources and best practices for early intervention and to develop a shared infrastructure to use and share information. The shared learning collaborative would not be data for the state but data for schools to share with each other to promote personal learning. Money from the Gates Foundation is being used in conjunction with other states to roll out tools that measure attendance, behavior and course performance. In Illinois, it will be introduced in RTT3 districts. A more personalized approach to education will help reduce dropouts.
  1. Members asked how this will help if a student is failing.
    - a. Superintendent Koch – The data system will allow schools to spot the problem earlier and intervene so that the student does not reach the point of failing. Addressing problems early is much more effective than addressing them after the student has failed. Additionally, schools need to move away from a standard model to accommodate what works best for their particular needs (Example: high schools that provide opportunities to earn community college credits have more students who successfully transition to college).
- ii. Mike McKindles discussed the Illinois Shared Learning Environment (ISLE) and the Longitudinal Data System (LDS).
  1. With ISLE, the aim is to get information into the classroom so that teachers and students can determine what the best next steps are for that specific student. Districts will choose what data to measure.
  2. The LDS is not just one thing: various outcomes from different systems will be integrated, with metrics added on top of that. The ISBE website has more info, and you can also find contact info there should you have questions. The LDS will give a fuller picture of the student, including at transition points, which will put us in a better position to identify students earlier when they are in need of intervention.
  3. Superintendent Koch – We’re changing from a single point-in-time assessment to multiple assessments during the year, available online. We are also adding teacher, student and parent surveys to give districts feedback beyond test scores.
- iii. Mike McKindles – ISBE is working with IBHE and ICCB to share data and create a high school-to-college success report. Now public universities are contributing and next year all MAP-receiving institutions will contribute data, which will greatly aid pipeline analysis.
  1. Miguel del Valle – Will there still be people falling through the cracks? For example, if a 17-year-old drops out and enrolls in a GED program, how is he or she recorded?
    - a. Mike McKindles – GED is not included in NGA calculation of high school graduate. Based on that definition, they are considered dropouts. Similarly, SPED certificate recipients are not counted as graduates.
  2. Miguel del Valle – What happens if a student leaves their school to attend a school in another country but then returns to the U.S?

- a. Mike McKindles – If a student moves to another country, comes back and doesn't re-register he or she is not counted as a dropout because he or she was validly removed from the cohort.
    - 3. Superintendent Koch – Another population for whom we need a cohesive plan includes students who are in the Juvenile Justice system.
  - iv. Elaine Allensworth – How often do schools submit enrollment data?
    - 1. Mike McKindles – It varies depending on the district's capabilities. Some such as CPS send it daily, but others that are not as capable will do so at different intervals. They are required to send official submissions in October, December, late winter/early spring and June.
      - a. Superintendent Koch – Data submission is tied to funding so schools are incentivized to report their enrollment, sometimes leading to over-reporting.
      - b. Mike McKindles – We do a lot of work to make sure we're only counting students once. Auto-notification goes out to both districts involved if it looks like we have a duplicated student, for example.
  - v. Elaine Allensworth – If a student transfers to another school are they counted as a transfer?
    - 1. Mike McKindles – Yes, they usually are. The problem lies more with attendance data, which is not reported on a daily basis throughout the state. The idea to make that a requirement has been proposed but that would impose a tremendous burden on some school districts' capabilities.
    - 2. Superintendent Koch – There is significant effort from ISBE to make sure transfers are only counted once. If it appears that a student is enrolled in two districts the system forces the school where the student was originally enrolled to "release" the student so that they can be enrolled in the new school. The new school will usually ask the old school to do so, and has an incentive because they want the funding for the new student.
  - vi. Elaine Allensworth – Is the state graduation report an aggregate of school or district graduation rates, or is it calculated on its own?
    - 1. Mike McKindles – We use raw numbers at both the school and state levels.
  - vii. Members engaged in a discussion about home school attendance rates. It was noted that these numbers are reported on a voluntary basis to regional offices. Illinois has few restrictions or guidelines on home schooling and no formal registration is required.
- c. ISBE's Definition and Measure of College and Career Readiness**
- i. Elaine Allensworth – How does ISBE measure College and Career Readiness?
    - 1. Mike McKindles – The ACT, three levels of work keys and the PSAE.
    - 2. Miguel del Valle – There is a P-20 Committee that is currently working on creating an Illinois-specific definition for what it means to be College and Career Ready.
- d. Current Efforts to Improve Graduation Rate**
- i. Miguel del Valle – There are programs and legislation already in existence thanks to the hard work of Sen. Lightford and others that will increase high school graduation. However, they are inadequately funded or not enforced. What, for example, is in the current School Code that we are not funding? We don't want to reinvent the wheel with this Commission's recommendations. (ISBE was asked to look into such policies and programs for the Commission.)

1. Jack Wuest mentioned the significant decrease in funding for truancy programs.
2. Superintendent Koch – The entire funding spectrum is depleted, which has an impact and exacerbates funding segregation.
- ii. Al Llorens – If students aren't provided with the intervention and support that they need do they get some sort of "asterisk"?
  1. Superintendent Koch – No, they are counted in the graduation rate the same as any other student.
- iii. Mark McDonald – Were the same calculations used in 2011 as were used in 2004?
  - a. Superintendent Koch – We will confirm that.
- iv. Jeff Mays – Programs in Quincy, including those funded by the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Grant, are working well. Time has been limited, but they're having an impact with at-risk kids. Districts should maintain latitude to make funding decisions.
  1. Miguel del Valle – Title I and the waiver are potential pots if that flexibility is allowed.
- v. Vanessa Kinder – The funding issue for Regional Safe Schools in S. Cook County is that 300-350 students are being served with only \$390,000 a year. Our school districts are more likely to put offenders out of the system rather than transferring them, because school districts have to provide funds for the transfer.
- vi. Julie Wollerman – The situation is so bad in southern Illinois that districts provide additional funding to help provide these services.
  1. Victor Zimmerman – We're dealing with this, too.
  2. Miguel del Valle – We need numbers and correlations to back this up.
- vii. **Pathways Initiative**
  1. Miguel del Valle – We're very excited about this, especially its broad approach that builds both 'hard' and 'soft' skills.
  2. Jeff Mays – All state agencies are aligned and private resources (STEM, etc.) are being aligned. It's a way to engage students where they are, based on their interests. It allows consistency and identifies multiple exit and entrance points for a student's education.
  3. Akeshia Craven – We've launched 5 early college high schools, and students will be able to make progress on a post-secondary degree while in high school. A health sciences school is a goal for 2013.
  4. Julie Smith – Part of Race to the Top dollars supported the rollout of Learning Exchanges. Thanks to Jeff and the business roundtable's work, we're closing in on \$10 million.
- e. **State's Data/Qualitative Analysis re: Alternative Schools/truancy**
  - i. Elaine Allensworth – What is the state capacity in terms of number of slots?
    1. Jack Wuest – About 2,000 slots outside of Chicago and about 4,000 slots in Chicago. And there are not a lot of funding resources. When the latest legislation is implemented, there will be up to 9,000 more slots. The overall need is about 40,000, or up to 80 or 90,000 if you expand to age 21. There is a task force meeting on this topic (in the City).
    2. Members noted that there is an issues of schools pushing students out because of behavior problems rather than sending them to alternative schools because that is not required. In recent years, legislation has been passed to discourage this practice.

3. Members in Springfield agreed that a survey needs to be conducted to measure the number of slots needed outside of Chicago.

**f. Impact of 2004 Change from 16 to 17**

- i. ISBE participants noted that there is research that indicates that there is little relationship between the compulsory school age and graduation. Members mentioned that some students say they are attending home school but in fact are dropping out.
  1. Miguel del Valle – I'd like to know more about this study – is it corroborated by other studies? At a minimum, raising the age does force schools to keep students for an additional year, which was part of the intent.
  2. Mark McDonald – I'm not surprised by that study's finding. What you do with the students is much more important than how long you keep them.
    - a. Miguel del Valle – We need to keep this in mind moving forward as we explore all options.
    - b. Senator Lightford – I agree. I think we've really clarified the central questions moving forward. Let's also look at enforcement of current policies.
- ii. Members suggested that a tool that provides analysis to show students what they need to do in order to get what they want from school could be helpful.
- iii. Members requested that any recommendations of the Committee include replicable, scale-up implementation tips for school districts.

**IV. Next Steps**

- a. Committee Co-Chairs requested that members submit possible names of experts who can speak to the Committee about specific activities, policies and /or procedures that are working.
- b. 11/8 was set as the tentative next meeting date

**V. Adjourn**